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ABSTRACT

This study examined what teachers accomplish in their everyday roles as storytellers, highlighting oral performances of ordinary teachers in their classrooms. The study occurred in a midwestern secondary school during 1991-1992. Three white male social studies teachers participated. The researcher conducted 14 months of participant observation, supplemented by semistructured interviews, within the school and community. The researcher attended classes several times each week, chatted with teachers and students informally, ate with students, participated in students' extracurricular activities and teachers' meetings, and kept detailed notes. Class periods were audiotaped and/or videotaped. The researcher coded information from narratives that were told and created narrative analyses of the teachers' history lectures and the history students' stories. Results indicated that the oralized history, which is generally ignored in discussions of teachers and teaching, is a far richer, more used type of history than test history and textbook history which is usually emphasized. Students remembered and enjoyed the communication process and the examples of the teachers making history a subjective, relevant source for use in everyday life. Teachers told complex stories, and students could recognize the value of such stories and the diverse viewpoints represented in them, as well as tell similar stories outside of class. Students were not given much opportunity to practice telling such stories as part of their formal education. (Contains 35 references.) (SM)

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Looking at the Overlooked:

A Narrative Analysis of How Teachers Combine Personal & Professional Knowledge

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Purpose

The goal of this research was to examine closely what teachers accomplish in their everyday, taken for granted roles as storytellers. I focused my attention on the oral performances of ordinary teachers in their everyday classrooms and found these performances to be significant events in which nationalized, canonized knowledge is transformed into localized knowledge that carries with it particular values. Using performance analysis grounded in folkloristic theory, I showed that the history lecture is a complex genre combining such simple genres as anecdote, personal experience story, and local legend. My research further suggested that it is the story as told by the performing teacher that is most likely to be recognized by students as relevant and useful. In this paper, I therefore argue that teachers' stories should not be viewed as trivial or as digressions, but as important components of the knowledge that teachers transmit to--and transform for--their students.

Perspective and theoretical framework

Researchers have begun to investigate teachers' problems of, and improvised solutions to, mediating between their private and public spheres, i.e., reconciling their personal beliefs and experiences with their professional responsibilities (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Hansen, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lederhouse, 1997; Schubert & Ayers, 1992). Stories seem to play an important role in such reconciliations: in Benham's (1997) words, "In part, it is through stories that I am able to discover my own professional and personal 'self' and balance the paradoxes of living in both the margin and the center" (1997, p. 282). Furthermore, stories constitute a "mode of knowing" that cannot "be reduced to abstract rules," and that "situated or storied knowledge of curriculum content, [etc.]" is central to expert teaching (Carter 1993, pp. 6-7; see also Carter, 1990; Kainan, 1995, 1996). Personal narratives brought into the classroom have a very different "orientation to meaning" than academic discourse does (Lemke, 1992, p. 28; see also Cazden & Hymes, 1978).

Studies of teachers' storytelling in classrooms, however, remain largely prescriptive (e.g., Egan, 1986; Wanner, 1994) rather than descriptive--possibly because school subjects that are largely narrative-based, i.e., the humanities, continue to be "de-emphasized if not totally ignored" (Jackson, 1995, p. 7). Carter (1993) identifies three areas of research on teachers' storytelling: (1) stories that novice and expert teachers tell about learning to teach; (2) teachers' personal, biographical stories in which life histories frame teaching events; and (3) stories told by teachers as part of their curriculum. Of these three areas, the third has been least developed, and studies in it generally lack close textual analysis (p. 8). How teachers actually do combine, use, and create stories from their professional and personal experience in their actual teaching has not been deeply examined, although Gudmundsottir (1990, 1991) moved us toward doing this when she noted how teachers' stories "are their attempts to transform an inadequate [textbook] story into a more complete, compelling, and convincing one" (1991, p. 212).

This research uses two theoretical perspectives developed by folklorists. The first concerns the nature of storytelling events as situations in which the unique story told is the result of the teller's interacting with an external text (the story) and with a particular audience: thus, "a story" exists only in the instance of its telling, and will never be duplicated exactly, because the situation of its teller and audience will never be exactly the same again (Georges, 1963).

The second concerns the phenomenon of complex, dialogic genres in which a supposedly single text (i.e., one story) is seen in actuality to consist of a number of diverse texts juxtaposed with, and played off of, each other: thus, "a story" really consists of numerous stories, which will be combined differently in each telling (Bauman, 1992).

In this research, I looked at teachers' storytelling events and the dialogic genres which constituted them as "mediating performances" (Hamer, 1995), which I conceived of as analogous to the sociological theory of mediating structures (Berger, 1976; Berger & Neuhaus, 1977). Just as mediating structures provide legitimation for personal experience while at the same time endowing "megastructures," such as the nation, with meaning and value (Berger, 1976; Mechling,

1989), mediating narrative performances, as agent-driven artistic verbal enactments of such structures (cf. Giddens, 1984), recognize the value of personal experience stories while endowing public stories with personal meaning. On one hand, the parts of a mediating narrative performance concerning megastructures (e.g., institutions and the nation) are made to refer to and thus reinforce private, personal life by validating its importance. On the other hand, parts of a mediating narrative performance concerning personal and interpersonal experiences are shown to relate to and thus endow characters and events in megastructures, including the nation, with personal meaning and emotional value. Considering teachers' narratives as mediating performances leads us to see how the complex stories told are not necessarily "carriers of dominant messages" or anecdotal illustrations "employed to close off sustained political and cultural analysis," (Goodson, 1995, pp. 95, 91). Though indeed, sometimes they are both of these things, teachers' stories sometimes critique the dominant culture as well.

One type of mediating narrative performance is what I have called "oralized history" (Hamer, 1995). The term oralized history is intended to draw attention to significant similarities between characteristics of oral histories as identified by oral historians, and characteristics of teachers' history lectures, heretofore understudied. "Oralized history" is defined as oral history that has been written down and published, i.e., has become institutionalized, but is then told orally again, i.e., in teachers' lectures. Oralizing history, i.e., the narrative process of mediating between the distant and past, and the familiar and present, involves the teacher/teller's taking stories about distant times and places from one source and retelling them in reference to oneself and one's immediate situation. Bauman & Briggs (1990) have theorized this type of practice as a matter of entextualization, decontextualization, and recontextualization. They have commented on the significance of the question of who is entitled and empowered to decontextualize a text from one context and recontextualize it into another (pp. 76-77). In the case of the teachers' storytelling in this study, the act of "decontextualizing" a text from the national context and "recontextualizing" it into a personal or local context was shown to require individuals' asserting the authority and

competence to do so.

Methodology

This study took place in a midwestern town of approximately 6,000 during the 1991-92 school year. It constitutes an ethnographic study utilizing the methods of participant-observation and interview. It is ethnographic rather than an ethnography in that it focuses on the uses of history in, rather than the comprehensive culture of, the high school and the community. My goal was to illuminate the process of learning history by looking at "history-making" (Thelen, 1991) as performed inside the school through the lens of "history-making" as practiced outside the school.

Site and Participant Selection

The school site was selected based on two criteria. The first was that the school be located in a community which had a clearly identifiable and easily accessible interest in "history" so that activities inside the school could be compared to those outside it. The town selected had held an annual "fall festival" since 1935, and archival research revealed that the festivals regularly commemorated local, state, and national historical events (Hamer, 1995). This particular town's school also met my second criterion, which was that the school not be recognized in any official way as a "model school," and that its teachers not be formally recognized as exceptional. In Elbaz's (1991) words, I was seeking "the ordinary teacher as subject" (p. 8).

Upon identifying the town and school as appropriate, I sent letters to and had preliminary interviews with all three social studies teachers who taught sections of U.S. History. All three agreed to participate in the study. All three also happened to be European-American, heterosexual males, and thus while not necessarily representative, were at least typical of teachers of secondary history classes in the U.S.

Data Collection

The larger study involved fourteen months of participant-observation, supplemented by semi-structured interviews, within both the school and the larger community. This report focuses on data from inside the school, so here I report only on data collection in the school.

Throughout the 1991-92 school year, three or four times each week I attended five sections of U.S. History at the high school. Before and after classes, I chatted informally with teachers and students in classrooms and halls; I regularly ate lunch with students; and I occasionally participated in students' extracurricular activities and teachers' meetings. During these times, I kept detailed, fieldnotes in spiral notebooks during history classes, and after classes I expanded these into descriptive accounts of the classes, handwritten in the same spiral notebooks. I also wrote descriptive, analytic, and personal fieldnotes on the computer every evening (Sanjek, 1991). In school, I audiotaped and occasionally videotaped class periods, many of which I later transcribed. Although I mostly talked to teachers and students informally and recorded the gist of these conversations in my fieldnotes, I also arranged multiple, tape-recorded, semi-structured interviews with all three teachers and with fifty students. These interviews were all transcribed and catalogued.

Data Analysis

During the course of the data collection, I found that the richest data were in the form of stories about the past, that is the actual histories themselves, as told by the teachers in class and the students in interviews.

Transcriptions of audiotaped class interactions and descriptive fieldnotes of untaped class interactions were initially coded for occurrences of narratives being told, and these narrative "chunks" of the descriptive notes and transcripts were reformatted and in some cases summarized so that discrete texts and their contexts could be easily compared and contrasted. These coded narratives were then repeatedly reviewed in order to analyze their content and form, and a rudimentary coding system was developed to facilitate comparison and contrast. All analysis and interpretation was informed by two other important sources of data: (1) transcriptions of interviews about the course and course content with the teachers and students, which provided critical commentary by both the teachers and the students about the nature of history and about particular stories; and (2) descriptive data of two case studies of history-making outside of

classrooms--one being the local festival and another being the unofficial town historian's house (reported in Hamer, 1995).

Data and Interpretation

In this paper, I will present examples of my narrative analyses of the history teachers' lectures and the history students' stories, as told in interviews, to illustrate my claim, based on analysis of many texts in addition to these, that the combining of diverse narrative genres was not only prevalent, but also necessary to communicating a history that was meaningful to the teacher himself and to some of the students. To say that the history was "meaningful" is not to claim that it was useful to all students: the stories told by the teachers, as they were formed in large part from the teachers' own experiences and worldviews, were inherently masculinist, a point to which we will return in the conclusion.

Teachers' stories

For example, when Mr. Glenn reminisced about his older brother Lonnie's bringing him home a hamburger and leaving it under his pillow (a personal experience story), as well as recalled Saddam Hussein's then recent exploits (an anecdote) in the context of telling about the German sinking of the Lusitania (a historical story from the textbook), all three stories were essential parts of one larger, complex story. Immediately preceding the text we will examine, Mr. Glenn had told the class about the U.S. entry into World War I following the sinking of the Lusitania. The passages excerpted here came after notes that he put on the overhead, reading, "The American people were outraged at Germany's [sinking the Lusitania]. . . . Germany pledged not to sink passenger ships and instructed its U-boats not to attack. . . ." Thus the textbook version of the story was that Germany backed down when they realized the U.S. was a serious adversary. In oralizing the story, Mr. Glenn elaborated to emphasize his moral of the story:

(1) Now this works in life--in the classroom, on the playground, at home. Everywhere there are bullies, and sometimes all you can do is tell someone you're going to beat them up if they don't leave you alone. I'm not advocating fighting, but I can tell them if they don't

leave me alone, I'm going to go get my good buddy Todd [he points to Todd, a student in class], who's a tremendous wrestler.

(2) When I was little, I'd size up the force against me, and get the one of my brothers best sized to fit. I had four brothers, Lonnie, Calvin, Gene, and Ralph. Depending on how strong the bully was, I'd get Calvin, or Gene, or Ralph to help me.

Gil: What about Lonnie?

(3) Oh, Lonnie was a diplomat. He was the best brother a person could have. My father passed away when I was three and Lonnie was thirteen-and-a-half, and he became like a father to me. He was the diplomat. When he went to a movie, he'd bring home a hamburger for me and put it under my pillow.

Gil: Your pillow? [other students laugh]

(4) Yeah, I'd wake up, and there'd be a big old hamburger, and I'd eat it for breakfast. Or candy-corn. You could get a whole pound bag for a nickel. He's a great brother. This year he sent me a dollar and told me to buy myself some candy corn. I called him up and asked where's the nickel for tax? [students laugh].

(5) Generally, if you're a bully, you're gonna get beat up. That was the problem with Mr. Hussein last fall: he was too stupid to realize he was picking on some pretty strong people, and that when they said he better not go into Kuwait, they were serious.

(6) So Germany backed down and pledged not to sink unless the ships resisted or tried to escape. (5 November 1991-wo)

In the first paragraph, Mr. Glenn marks the beginning of the simple story that will complicate the textbook story with "Now." He brings the textbook story of the past event into the present situation, first by removing boundaries of time and space ("everywhere there are bullies") and then by bringing a student in the present context into the timeless story of bullies. In the second paragraph, Mr. Glenn's personal experience story moves the story back in time. Students respond to his experience and thus shape the story told in this particular storytelling event: Mr. Glenn is not

going to talk about Lonnie until Gil pushes him with his question, because it is the character of the three older brothers as potential defenders rather than that of the "diplomat" that is particularly relevant to the larger story told. The third part of the story thus emerges from the social situation: with Gil's prompt, the story may seem to be diverted off track, but in fact this part elaborates on the character of the four older brothers willing to stand up in different ways for the younger. In part four, the staying power of such association is brought out with the recent birthday present: the history is brought into the present with the anecdote about Lonnie's sending money for candy corn. Although this is not illustrative of the bully theme, it provides a parallel for the fifth part of the story, when Mr. Glenn returns to the historical story and makes the point of the story originating with the Lusitania: Lonnie's past actions have parallels in the present; the past actions of the U.S. with Germany in World War I have parallels in the more contemporary actions of the U.S. with Saddam Hussein in the Persian Gulf War. Paragraph six concludes with a return to the initial, textbook story.

In performing this complex story, a combination of the textbook story with three other stories, Mr. Glenn mediates between the history lesson and the students' experiences. First, he establishes familiarity by referring to the student Todd and then by recalling his own childhood. Then he builds intimacy by acquiescing to Gil's interest in his personal experience. Finally, he brings the story back around to the historical event, via the story of a recent, familiar historical event. Through this complex oralized history, emotional involvement in the collective nation is encouraged through the emotional involvement with the brothers. The diverse narratives, of different durations and locations, and in past, present and future, are layered together into one narrative. Most importantly, it is in the telling of the narrative itself that these connections are made: the particular narrated stories are given their shape and thus their meaning by being put into the context of each other. In this particular storytelling event, none of the four stories that make up the complex story is dispensable. This type of story was not unusual for, nor was it unique to, Mr. Glenn, as the following analysis of a story by Mr. Glenn's colleague, Mr. Michaels, will

show. -

A central characteristic of Mr. Michaels' oralized history was that it brought ambiguity to the fore, and left it in the fore. That is, his histories commonly presented situations about which no conclusive, authoritative generalization could satisfactorily be made, and thus for which no absolute rules could be given, because individual particularities in the form of personal experience stories continually interrupted the master narrative of the nation. These personal experience stories also served to emphasize empathy with the individual predicament in the face of institutional power. For example, in teaching about the U,S.'s problems fighting in Vietnam, Mr. Michaels told:

(1) The U.S. was looking for support of the [South-Vietnamese] peasants, but it's pretty obvious, . . . if I was a peasant, I would not support the American cause. What did they do? We said that we're looking for peasant support, but what proved just the opposite?

Sarah: We burned their houses.

(2) Yeah, we burned down their houses. You know, it's kind of like-- Now I remember, as a kid in school, that if somebody did something, we all paid the price for it; we all suffered. "If he does something, by golly, you're all staying in detention." . . . But you shouldn't massively . . . condemn everybody for the actions of one or just a few people.

(3) Yet we did, over there, because [our soldiers would say], "There may have been some fire from one or a couple of these huts," but we would then burn them all down. . . . Now, there might be a reason for that, the reason being that that would give them fewer places to hide.

(4) On the other hand, take yourself as a peasant. That's the only thing those people owned; the only thing they had were these little shacks. But that's still your home. My house is not much. It's a little shack in a sense. But it's all I've got, and boy, I would be

upset if someone came in and burned my house down, destroyed it.

(5) So, you can kind of get the feeling of what it would be like for someone to come in and destroy the only things that you have. (7 May 1992-to)

In the first paragraph, Mr. Michaels sets himself up as empathizing with the Vietnamese peasant, saying, "If I was a peasant, I would not support the American cause." In the second paragraph, he tells a personal experience story, marked with the phrase, "Now I remember," to personalize the "peasant's" story further.

In the third paragraph, Mr. Michaels briefly presents the U.S. soldier's side of the story, before, in the fourth paragraph, he reiterates, "Take yourself as a peasant." With this instruction, he takes himself as a peasant, with a modest house (and, later in the lecture, with grandchildren). Shifting into first person singular, he reacts fervently, as he imagines a Vietnamese peasant would to someone "com[ing] in and burn[ing] my house down, destroy[ing] it." Then he immediately shifts to what he intends for the students to get--"the feeling of what it would be like. . . ."

On the personal level, Mr. Michaels reasons, people have similar needs, desires and duties; on the political level, people become implicated in situations that cause conflict and suffering. Conflating the Vietnamese peasant experience with his own personal experience establishes the primacy of a personal discourse as opposed to a national discourse.

It was through these types of complex narratives that teachers reconciled and combined their personal experiences with their professional curricula. Teachers brought distant, textbook history into personal realms that while perhaps not most relevant to all their students' experiences and worldviews, were at least familiar to them. This allowed students in turn to critique the historical stories they heard in class in their own personal ways.

Students' stories

The data/stories from students that I collected were almost entirely from interviews or conversations outside of class. That is, student storytelling was not a part of the curriculum of these classes. However, in discussing their teachers' lectures, many students ably critiqued the

differences between the teacher's telling, the textbook's telling, and their significant others' (e.g., parents, bosses, neighbors) stories about the same historical events, and these students were apparently entirely comfortable with the ambiguity presented by different versions of a single event.

In the following oralized history about U.S. and Soviet antagonisms, Mr. Glenn did not draw upon any personal experiences, but he gave a highly personalized moral point to the story through his artistic development of it. The students first read from their textbook an account of Truman's confronting the Soviet Ambassador Molotov, and then Mr. Glenn retold the story. A student, Eve, later retold to me what the two different versions were about; her explanation makes clear how she used her own experiences to mediate between the textbook's and Mr. Glenn's versions, and thus to recognize that ostensibly the same story can have more than one meaning, depending on how it is told.

In the textbook version, as follows, the context for the famous confrontation was abbreviated so that Truman's actions seemed to be based mostly on his temperament:

> . . . According to Roosevelt's key adviser, Harry Hopkins, Truman himself knew "absolutely nothing of world affairs." What Truman did bring to the presidency was a deep mistrust of the USSR. Unlike Roosevelt, he had serious doubts that successful negotiations with the Soviets could occur.
>
> **Relationships Cool** From the start, Truman's advisers urged him to get tough with the Soviets. Many of them believed that Stalin would take advantage of the United States unless Truman stood firm. The lesson of Munich was fresh in their minds. It was Munich where British Prime Minister Chamberlain gave in to Hitler; appeasement had brought war, not peace.
>
> This advice suited Truman fine. A blunt, impatient man, suspicious of the Soviet Union, he quickly adopted a hard-line approach.
>
> Truman's first chance to show his muscle came two weeks into his presidency

when Soviet ambassador V. M. Molotov paid him a visit. In an effort to show his strength, Truman interrupted Molotov and sharply criticized him for failing to support the Yalta agreements. Specifically, he demanded to know why the Soviets had not held free elections in Poland.

Accustomed to Roosevelt's friendly, patient style, Molotov was shaken. 'I have never been talked to like that in my life,' he reportedly said to Truman.'

'Carry out your agreements and you won't get talked to like that,' Truman snapped. (Nash 1991: 464)

The textbook version is predicated on Truman's being fundamentally ill-informed about world events and bigoted toward the Soviets, and upon the response of Truman's cabinet to a perceived pattern they recognized from past conflicts rather than upon a response to present reality. If there is a moral to the textbook story, it is that ignorant, biased actions on Truman's part exacerbated tensions between the U.S. and the Soviets.

In contrast, Mr. Glenn's version expanded the context in order to structure the story to have a different moral: the Soviets broke their agreement, so the U.S. and other Western countries had to come down on them, as in this excerpt:

As a result of the western nations' objecting to letting Poland become a part of the United Nations,

as a result of that, the Soviet Union threatened to walk out of the charter meeting [of the United Nations] in San Francisco.

And the West knew that if the Soviet Union walked out, that the United Nations charter would be doomed. It would not get off the ground.

And so the Soviets played what you would call a trump card,

because they knew that without their support the United Nations would not come about because the Soviet Union covered a vast amount of territory,

because it controlled Poland,

it controlled Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria!

Yugoslavia was communist at that time.

And China had not become communist yet. This didn't happen until 1949.

Now as a result of the Soviet threat to walk out, Mr. Truman, speaking--and we read this a moment ago--Mr. Truman, speaking to Molotov, proceeded to chew out Mr. Molotov [Mr. Glenn pauses]

. . . .

They had made agreements.

They had said that they would provide free elections,

that they would permit the other nations to have free elections.

And when Mr. Truman started chewing on Molotov, he turned around and said, "I've never been talked to in my life like this!"

It was rather startling for a foreign minister of the Soviet Union to be dressed down, if you will, by the President of the United States.

He said, "I've never been talked to in my life like this!"

Mr. Truman by this time with a suspicion of the Soviets, and showing that he didn't have a lot of trust in them, turned around and responded to Molotov by saying, "Carry out your agreements.

You do

what you said you would do,

and if you will do

what you said you would do,

then you won't get talked to like that, by myself," to paraphrase it.

So Truman replied, "Carry out your agreements, and you won't get talked to like this." . . . (6 February 1992-to)

Mr. Glenn expands his version from the textbook's version in order to tell a story that has a

distinct moral. He does this not only by providing additional content, but also by structuring the story with repetition and elaboration--classic characteristics of orally performed discourse. He repeats "as a result" three times; then he repeats "Molotov" three times, emphasizing the link between the Soviets' threat to walk out and Molotov's treatment by Truman. This pattern of emphasis and embellishment works orally, and the repetition of the "as a result" builds dramatic tension. Between these lines, Mr. Glenn elaborates on the Soviets' position of strength, using parallelism to emphasize why the West knew the United Nations would fail without the Soviets. His listing the countries--Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, China--works rhetorically to "build" the Soviet Union's strength: we are not told they are strong, but are shown their strength through the "piling up" of their territories. The detail that China had not yet become communist at that time suggests the continuation of the narrative through time.

The textbook delivers the punch-line still in the context of the character of Truman rather than in the context of the actions of the Soviets: "Truman snapped." In contrast, Mr. Glenn's version emphasizes the "dressing-down" and, from his point of view, Truman's reason for the dressing down, through repetition and parallelism: "they had made," "they had said," they would permit," interrupts the repeated sequence "given a . . . chewing out by Truman," "Truman proceeded to chew," and "Truman started chewing." Finally Truman's words "Carry out your agreements" are repeated twice, the first with an elaboration of Truman's quote, again in parallel structure, that plays on doing what you say you'll do. This emphasized, of course, the moral of the story, which is a version of the Golden Rule: carry out your agreements with others, and they will carry out their agreements with you.

The day after Mr. Glenn lectured on Truman and Molotov, I asked Eve what they had been doing in his class. Eve recalled learning about Truman and Molotov. Then, clearly interested in the conflict, she said the book seemed biased, but Mr. Glenn seemed more objective. Opening her book, she pointed to the words "sharply criticized," "patient, friendly style," and "snapped." She explained:

> Well . . . in the book it says . . . just after he had the atomic bomb and everything he wasn't very nice to the--I think it was, the prime minister of the USSR. And the way Mr. Glenn taught it, it was--well I think he's trying to teach it so like he doesn't put any of his personal feelings in it; I think that's what teachers are supposed to do. But it seemed like the book was saying, more like, Truman was--I don't know, . . . I don't want to say mean, but-- [trails off]. But then, it's probably hard for them [the textbook authors] . . . , because they're trying to say how it is without saying. (7 February 1992-ti)

Especially with her last comment, Eve picks up on an important feature of textbook discourse. First, the textbook author does have a point of view, but he seldom expresses it explicitly. Rather, he tries to minimize the appearance of it. The adjectives, as she points out, betray personal biases on the part of the teller/textbook writer. It could be that Mr. Glenn's use of the formal features of repetition, parallelism, and elaboration made, in Eve's mind, his story unfold more realistically. More importantly, perhaps, the moral of Mr. Glenn's story made its meaning clear: it made the story make more sense, and it became, then, a story that Eve could compare to other stories and experiences.

It is interesting that Eve was able both to recognize and to question the moral of the stories Mr. Glenn told. She continued:

> Or maybe Mr. Glenn's making it better than it was. I can't tell because I don't know. I was trying to think--well, I was thinking yesterday in class, how he was saying the USSR has a past of not following through with their promises and everything, and I was wondering how other countries study us, because they're saying, "Don't believe everything you hear." Like in other countries, they say bad stuff, they say stuff about us just because they don't want their young people to like us and things like that. (7 February 1992-ti)

That is, even though Eve thought Mr. Glenn probably kept his personal opinion out of the classroom because "that's what teachers are supposed to do," she also recognized that the moral of his story depended on his point of view, as a citizen of the U.S., and that other people, especially in other countries, probably have different views. Eve took Mr. Glenn's story of Truman and Molotov, where he had already put the events and motivations into a framework with a moral, and recontextualized it into her own framework that questioned whether this is really the only true story. Eve did not seem at all distressed by this; rather, she found it interesting to think about, and she brought it up without prompting as a puzzle worth talking about. It is not so important that Eve agree with the moral of Mr. Glenn's story as it is that his story is a good, memorable story that has a moral with which she can agree or disagree, once she compares and contextualizes it with her own experiences and with other narratives she hears. Though her teacher told stories in which he came to an unambiguous, highly moralistic conclusion, Eve's understanding of Mr. Glenn's story and the textbook's story was, like Mr. Michael's presentation of history, highly tolerant of ambiguity. Her version of the story--composed of her comparison and contrast of the two versions read and heard--presented the situation as ambiguous, and as a storyteller she was comfortable with the conclusion that no conclusive, authoritative generalization could satisfactorily be made.

A critique by another student, Kim, suggests a relationship between students' hearing people tell stories in which they have a personal investment, and students' recognition of different people's authority to tell stories. Kim explained why she sometimes did not like classroom history:

Kim: I've learned more from my dad telling me about Vietnam than I've ever learned in a class. I mean, he never explained to me about the South [Vietnam] being split, but he tells me what it was really like. He doesn't go into detail; he goes into details, but just not stupid details like "the North were Communist." Well who cares what they were? They were fighting, is the way I look at it. I mean, we may have gone over there to stop

Communism supposedly, or whatever the U.S. had a reason to be over there for, but the fact is we were over there and we can't change it now.

LH: So when you say he talks about the important stuff. What is that?

Kim: My dad? Well he tells me what it was really like. It's not like reading a book. If you're reading a book, you don't know: most of the time they kind of make it sound better than it really was, or make it sound worse than it really was. But with Vietnam, it's definitely that they make it sound better.

This textbook, though, is a lot better than past ones, because they have like people's opinions in it. I like that. But most of the time it's like, "The U.S. went to Vietnam; the U.S. screwed up in Vietnam." . . . (14 May 1992-ti)

Kim raises several key issues in her critique. Most broadly, although the textbook they are using "is a lot better than past ones," it still cannot tell what war was "really like" as a familiar person like her father can tell about his personal experiences. Kim thinks that hearing such personal experience stories makes it "easier to make your own decisions" about what an event means. Again, like Eve, Kim is comfortable with the conclusion that there is no one conclusion--no one correct version--of a story, because the personal experience of the teller enters into the story.

Concluding Thoughts

This research suggests that it is the oralized history, which is generally ignored in discussions of teachers and teaching, that is a far richer, far more used type of history than the test history and textbook history that is usually focused on as the history in history classes. It is the communication process, and the example of the teacher's making history a subjective, relevant source for use in everyday life, that students remember and that interests them.

Furthermore, the stories that teachers tell are significant instances of individuals' claiming the right and authority to decontextualize stories canonized as nationally significant, and recontextualize them in the context of their own personal and local stories. Teachers do this decontextualization/ recontextualization as a normal part of their everyday practice, yet this

prominent aspect of teachers' narrating has heretofore been overlooked.

That in their courses, the teachers present their versions of history and that the students generally do not is very important, especially since half of high school students are female and most of high school history is male-dominated, and especially since people of color continue to be underrepresented in the U.S. teacher population. The omission of students' storytelling is further significant in its implications for the politics of knowledge (Apple, 1993) and particularly questions of what students actually learn to do, e.g., whether they learn to recognize someone else's answer as authoritative or to write their own persuasive essay (Anyon, 1980; Oakes, 1986).

In this research, teachers were telling complex stories, and students were able to recognize the value of such stories, and the diverse viewpoints represented in them, as well as to tell similar ones outside of class, but students were not given much opportunity to practice telling such stories as part of their formal education. Indeed, there are few reported instances of teachers' focusing their curriculum on students' practicing telling their own stories (but see Makler, 1991; Middleton, 1992). Of course, this may well be because the kinds of complex knowledge contained in narratives is difficult to measure and grade (Jackson, 1995, p. 7). However, if learning something means being able to use it in a significant way, then we need to pay attention to how teachers use/tell knowledge in their subject areas, and how students might learn to use/tell it as well.

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